

Speech file

I. The history of mankind can be reduced to one long and tragic series of conflicts between rival camps, with empires, cultures, or continents as the prize.

When the tiny band of Ancient Greeks stood shoulder to shoulder against the hordes of Persia in the narrow pass of Thermopylae some 2,500 years ago, they were well aware that civilization as they knew it hung in the balance. They died at the Fiery Gate -- not merely to defend the sunburned hills of Greece from an invader -- but to preserve a way of life. When victory came later on the broad plains of Marathon and the last Persian was driven from the soil of Greece, the survivors must have faced the future with relief, "for surely" -- they must have thought -- "the last great world war has now become history."

But it was not true then, nor was it true later when Charles Martel halted the advance of the Moslems in the West at Tours in 732, nor when Don John of Austria won at Lepanto in 1571, nor when the Turks were turned back from the gates of Vienna in 1683. For it is the tragic message of history that conflict and struggle are as inevitable as life and death itself. Centuries before Thermopylae, the sands of Palestine ran red with the blood of Babylonians, Assyrians, Hebrews, and Egyptians; and since Thermopylae, on down to our own time, mankind has continued to witness the rise of new world powers, only to see each collapse in turn before a younger rival or a coalition of powers.

Students of history like the philosopher Hegel or the historian Spengler have concluded that struggle is the one inescapable reality in history. Perhaps this is an oversimplification, but the fact remains that it is an unusual moment in history when the world is not divided into opposing camps.

It would be our undoing, however, if in our present situation, we were to see in the Soviet Union nothing but one more empire struggling for its place in the sun. This so-called "cold war" is not cast in the familiar pattern -- the conflict of the British Empire with the Spanish Empire in the days of the first Queen Elizabeth or the rivalry of the German and English commercial empires in our own century. Call it aggressive coexistence or what you will, the fact remains that we are facing something new, and something more far-reaching in its consequences than anything that history has yet recorded.

II. The struggle before us differs from the great contests of history in both scope and kind.

In the first place, we are not engaged merely in a struggle over land. If this were all that was at stake, the solution to our problem would be simple: match the military power of a potential aggressor with the certainty of massive and overwhelming retaliation.

Neither are we confronted merely with a rise of nationalistic fervor as in the past. The civilized world has learned how to deal with Pan-Germanism and Pan-Slavism, and although the Soviet Union plays upon the national aspirations of any group to gain its own ends -- witness its cynical promotions of certain elements of Pan-Arab nationalists -- the main battle field of the current struggle does not lie here.

Nor can the issues of the struggle be reduced to simple economic terms. Classical Bolshevik economic concepts have given way to financial and industrial techniques that would be incomprehensible to the orthodox Marxian of a generation ago. This is not a struggle in which

industrial capacity or the wealth of natural resources alone will determine the victor. We cannot buy or build our way out of this one.

If the issues of the cold war cannot be expressed solely in military, political, or economic terms, how then are we to define them?

We must begin by recognizing the fact that this is total war and that it involves every phase of Western civilization from religion and philosophy to science and education. We are faced by a new kind of enemy.

Although the language and customs of the Western nations differ superficially, all Western civilization has in common concepts of what is right and wrong, true and false, free and slave. When we communicate with one another, we make progress because we have common foundations on which to build.

In the Soviet Union we are faced with a potential enemy who has rejected not only our political and economic systems but also the very definitions of truth, justice, and morality which have been held by all civilized peoples.

As a result, it seems impossible to communicate -- say nothing about negotiate or conclude anything -- with a Russian. How can one reason in a spirit of good will and mutual compromise with one to whom "liberation" means "conquest?" With one to whom truth is simply a device to be cynically manipulated to serve selfish ends?

Make no mistake about it -- this is total war. Our antagonist is on fire with his own perverted messianic missionary zeal. He is out to conquer the world -- not only our cities and lands, but our hearts and minds as well. Time and time again he has stated arrogantly that he will wait

for us to collapse from within or that he has the power to defeat us in battle, and he has promised that when he is victorious, he will remake us in his own image.

What, then, are we going to do about it?